



Unlock Your Potential

**What do you want
to accomplish?**

**What would you start today
if you knew you could not fail?**

**What's holding you
back from achieving
your goals?**

Everyone has goals they want to reach, challenges they are striving to overcome, ideas that need a road map and times when they feel stuck.

A growing number of individuals are turning to professional coaching for support in identifying and living out their vision and purpose so they can be the best versions of themselves. Partnering with a professional coach can unlock your potential and set you on the path to thriving personally and professionally.

As the world's largest organization of professionally trained business and personal coaches, the International Coach Federation (ICF) is committed to setting high standards for the industry, advancing the art and science of coaching, and helping clients get the most out of their partnership with a professional coach.



What is coaching?

ICF defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. Coaching is a client-driven process. The coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable

The coaching process helps clients improve their outlook on work and life, while improving their leadership skills and unlocking their potential.

“What most impresses me about my coach is his level of energy and enthusiasm. He shows these two characteristics in every coaching session. His listening and questioning skills help me—and my team—discover new insights and develop strategies for future development. In his coaching sessions, he creates a safe, comfortable and engaging environment. His integrity, energy, openness and humor make him an empowering coach.”

Drago Dervarič, CEO
Saubermacher & Komunala D.O.O.



A photograph of two men in dark suits sitting on ornate white metal chairs on a stone terrace. They are facing each other, engaged in conversation. The terrace overlooks a valley with a town and mountains in the background. A white text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

“Coaching is a guided process where somebody helps you through the power of questions and active listening come to your own conclusions. You help to get your own answers, and these are the best answers because you are the expert for yourself. I think coaching is the leadership style of the future.”

—Janez Hudovernik, Associate Certified Coach (Slovenia)

How is coaching distinct from other service professions?

Professional coaching focuses on setting goals, creating outcomes and managing personal change. Sometimes it's helpful to understand coaching by distinguishing it from other personal or organizational support professions.

- **Therapy:** Therapy deals with healing pain, dysfunction and conflict within an individual or in relationships. The focus is often on resolving difficulties arising from the past that hamper an individual's emotional functioning in the present, improving overall psychological functioning, and dealing with the present in more emotionally healthy ways.

Coaching, on the other hand, supports personal and professional growth based on self-initiated change in pursuit of specific actionable outcomes. Coaching is future-focused, and the coaching relationship emphasizes action, accountability and follow-through.

- **Consulting:** Individuals or organizations retain consultants for their expertise. While consulting approaches vary widely, the assumption is the consultant will diagnose problems and prescribe and, sometimes, implement solutions.

With coaching, the assumption is that individuals or teams are capable of generating their own solutions, with the coach supplying supportive, discovery-based approaches and frameworks.

- **Mentoring:** A mentor is an expert who provides wisdom and guidance based on his or her own experience. Mentoring may include advising, counseling and coaching.

The coaching process does not include advising or counseling, and focuses instead on individuals or groups setting and reaching their own objectives.

- **Training:** Training programs are based on objectives set out by the trainer or instructor. Though objectives are clarified in the coaching process, they are set by the individual or team being coached, with guidance provided by the coach. Training also assumes a linear learning path that coincides with an established curriculum. Coaching is less linear, without a set curriculum.

- **Athletic Development:** Though sports metaphors are often used, professional coaching is different from sports coaching. The athletic coach is often seen as an expert who guides and directs the behavior of individuals or teams based on his or her greater experience and knowledge.

Professional coaches possess these qualities, but their experience and knowledge of the individual or team determines the direction. Additionally, professional coaching does not focus on behaviors that are being executed poorly or incorrectly. Instead, the focus is on identifying opportunity for development based on individual strengths and capabilities.



"I love helping people. love helping people work through things that have kept them stuck, have kept them staying small, have kept them from living to their fullest potential. And now I have the opportunity to help other people who are like me, well educated, trained professionals who have invested a lot in a career, and I can help them to put all the pieces together and get in touch with what it is they really want to do. And help them through the transition so they can live the rest of their life really fulfilled."

—Julia Mattern, ICF Professional Certified Coach (USA)

Why should I partner with a coach?

If you want to take advantage of an opportunity or challenge, feel “stuck” on the path to achieving your goals or simply believe there is something more to discover in your personal or professional life, partnering with a professional coach could be beneficial for you.

According to the **2014 ICF Global Consumer Awareness Study**, the most frequently cited reasons for partnering with a coach were to optimize individual/team work performance (42%), expand professional career opportunities (33%) and increase self-esteem/self-confidence (31%).

Other common reasons for partnering with a coach include:

- Maximizing potential
- Defining strengths and weaknesses
- Improving business management strategies
- Managing work/life balance

A growing number of organizations are investing in coaching to help workers grow their skills, enhance their value and reach their professional goals. Organizational decision-makers report using coaching to augment the organization’s leadership development strategy; increase employee engagement; improve communication skills, teamwork and decision-making; and increase productivity.





"...I love the moment when my coachee get an ah-ha moment or realizes I need to change or even, I want to change. And then starts this passion. I see passion coming from them that they would like to make changes."

—Kentaro Hayashi, ICF Associate Certified Coach (Japan)

What are the benefits of partnering with a coach?

Professional coaching brings a host of benefits, including fresh perspectives on personal and professional challenges, enhanced decision-making skills, and increased confidence. Coaching can also have a powerful ripple effect, sparking transformation in your family, your community and your workplace.

According to respondents to a 2014 survey conducted by ICF and the Human Capital Institute, benefits of coaching cited by decision-makers in organizations using coaching included:

- Increased engagement
- Faster on-boarding
- Faster leadership development
- Increased emotional intelligence
- Improved team functioning
- Increased commitment
- Increased job satisfaction

“As a result of coaching, I learned to listen, respect and live true to my inner voice—(my true self.) Thanks to coaching, my lifestyle made a 180-degree turn. My ICF coach always applied both coaching skills and life experience very appropriately to lead me to where I needed to go. I respect his ethical and well-mannered coaching approach.”

Takeshi Horiuchi
Independent business owner





“Coaching essentially is a process that will allow you to get where you want to be in a much shorter time and to achieve the success that you want to achieve in your life without doing it on your own. One of the things as a coach is that often if people want to be stretched, then we give the opportunities to be stretched.”

—Inta Sellick, ICF Professional Certified Coach (Australia)

How do I find a coach?

Before you begin the process of hiring a coach, take the opportunity to reflect on your objectives for the coaching engagement. Being clear on your goals during the hiring process enables you to find the coach best-suited to help you reach them. Because coaching is a partnership, you should also consider how much value you place on collaboration, other viewpoints and new perspectives. Because coaching is a client-driven process, your buy-in is essential to ensure maximum results.

ICF recommends that you interview three coaches before you make a hiring decision. Ask each about his or her qualifications, experience and skills, and be sure to request at least two client references.

Consider asking the following questions of each prospective coach:

- What is your coaching experience (number of individuals coached, years of experience, types of coaching situations, etc.)?
- What is your coach-specific training (enrolled in an ICF approved training program, other coach-specific training, etc.)?
- What is your coaching specialty or areas in which you most often work?
- What is your philosophy about coaching?
- What types of assessments are you certified to deliver?
- What are some of your coaching success stories (specific examples of individuals who have succeeded as a result of coaching)?

Selecting a coach who holds an ICF Credential ensures that you're working with the best in the industry. Possession of an ICF Credential is a clear sign of a coach's commitment to professional excellence. Currently, more than 16,000 individuals hold one of three ICF Credentials distinguishing themselves as consummate professionals.

ICF Credential-holders have fulfilled rigorous education and experience requirements and demonstrated a strong commitment to excellence in coaching. To be eligible for an ICF Credential, a coach must complete coach-specific training; achieve a designated number of coaching experience hours; partner with a Mentor Coach; and demonstrate the appropriate understanding and mastery of ICF's definition of coaching, Code of Ethics and Core Competencies.

You may also find it helpful to know that industry research shows a positive link between coaches' credentials and professional memberships, and their clients' overall satisfaction with the coaching experience. According to the 2014 *ICF Global Consumer Awareness Study*, 93 percent of consumers who recalled that their coach held a credential or certification reported being "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with the coaching experience.

Begin your search for an ICF-credentialed coach with the free Coach Referral Service housed at **[Coachfederation.org/findacoach](https://www.coachfederation.org/findacoach)**.



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The International Coach Federation (ICF) seeks to advance the art, science and practice of professional coaching and exists to lead the global advancement of the coaching profession. Learn more about ICF at [Coachfederation.org](https://www.coachfederation.org).

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